

BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH LIEUTENANT GENERAL MARTIN DEMPSEY,
COMMANDER, MULTINATIONAL SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND-IRAQ

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THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT.

MODERATOR: Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey, the commander of the Multinational Security Transition Command in Iraq, is with us now for this bloggers roundtable.

General Dempsey, glad you could be with us, sir.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, as I said at the start, it's my pleasure. This is a first for me, and there's not many things that I do in Iraq that I could say are firsts anymore, so this is pretty good.

MODERATOR: All right, sir. Very good.

Do you have any opening statement, or can we just move right into questions?

GEN. DEMPSEY: I hadn't prepared one, but I'm always keen to tell you extemporaneously, maybe, what I -- how I think things are going. So I'll give a brief opening statement in that spirit.

The -- we've got a -- you know, we watch the whole enterprise from the individual soldier and policeman, all the way up to the Ministry of Defense. And my general assessment of all that is that, at the tactical level, where unit performance is the true metric of performance, we're doing quite well. I mean, these Iraqi soldiers are fighting, dying, being wounded, moving around the country now on behalf of the central government. Now that's not to say that there's not challenges; that sometimes when they move, they -- there's a portion or percentage of the soldiers that do not move. But in every case, we've got a group of units and leaders who are essentially acknowledging their responsibilities and their accountability in a way that simply we didn't see a year ago.

Now, as you work your way up the institution, though, to the level of systems and processes -- things like logistics architectures, communications architectures, intelligence architectures -- it becomes far more challenging and far more difficult to establish those, because the higher up you run in the echelons of command, the more the vulnerabilities of leadership tend to become evident. To state it another way, most of the senior leaders of both army and police forces are from the former regime, and old habits die hard I think is the way I would describe it.

Nevertheless, we find for the most part, in particular the two ministers are keen to overcome those bad habits and put systems in place to actually support the fielded forces. And so what we do is try to -- if you think about taking the male and the female end of a plug and pulling it together, that's kind of where we are now.

We've got some things that are going pretty well at the tactical level; we've got some things that are going pretty well at the institution level. And the challenge now is to kind of pull it together and plug it in so that we've got a complete system that runs from top to bottom, and we're not there yet.

There are still some holes in the system. We've got them, I think, pretty well identified and are moving toward it. And with that, I think I will allow you to ask me questions.

Q So I guess, I'm up first, right, Jack?

MODERATOR: That's right. Yeah, David, go ahead.

Q All right, General, this is David Axe.

GEN. DEMPSEY: David Axe, did you say.

Q David Axe, right from a number of places, Aviation Week namely.

But I wanted to zero in on a couple of those problem areas. Can we talk about logistics some? And yeah, so where does the development of logistical systems stand? And what are the things you're focused on? And then I want to follow up after you answer that.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Sure, okay, the logistics architecture in general was -- from its inception, it was built to be contractor-supported. And that was a conscious decision made in concession of two things, I would say. One is that the real issue from the beginning was to get Iraqi soldiers and policemen out actually performing security missions, so that they could establish some credibility with their fellow Iraqis. And so it was in our interest. We believe then and we believe now that, to the greatest extent possible, to have Iraqi soldiers and policemen out there with us.

Now what that did is it in some ways deferred the logistics architecture, at least in the part of logistics that you and I might know as self-performed. But the other advantage to doing contract-supported logistics, of course, is, it puts thousands of Iraqis to work on behalf of the security forces. So life support, for example, food, notably, is contract-supported and has been right from the start.

Now what's interesting about logistics in my three years here is that I would describe the growth of the logistics architecture as kind of evolutionary, certainly not revolutionary. There's been nothing rapid about it. But we've had to overcome some pretty significant challenges, chief among them of course is, we're trying to do all this in contact with the enemy. And so you know, the enemies of Iraq understand the vulnerabilities that logistics bring and often attack those vulnerabilities.

Secondly, it's contractor-supported, but there are also some Iraqi, you know, soldiers who were trained as mechanics and trained as signaleers and trained as ammunition handlers and things.

But in those early days, even though they were being trained to do that, the more compelling need was to put soldiers in checkpoints and put soldiers in guard towers and put soldiers out on the street. And as a result, we often found that the logisticians we were cranking out of the logistics academies were being diverted into other things.

I mean, we've caught up, almost, in doing that. But to get there, we had to expand the training base. In the early days, we could routinely train 25,000 to 40,000 a year; this year, we'll end up training about 70,000 in training bases for the year, and we're building additional capacity so that they could have the potential to produce about 90,000 in a given year out of the training base. So it's been somewhat --

Q (Off mike) -- 90,000 of all MOSs, so to speak?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, sure. The need for logistics is approximately 36,000 right now, given that it's largely contractor supported.

Now, one other thing about the contract support business. There has been, again, an evolution of contracts. The first statements of work for life support, for example, were contracts that allocated about \$12.50 per man per day; the statements of work that were worked out by the Iraqi ministries were -- they were not very well-written. We and they were learning as we went.

We're in our fourth iteration now with life support contracts. There's 47 life support contracts that support the Army, for example, across the country, and now it's about \$10 per soldier per day. In the early days, the incidents of corruption were rather dramatic. There were plenty of instances where that \$12.50 translated into about \$4 of value.

But now we've got it to where -- you know, by putting in checks and balances, quality assurance measures -- now we've got it to the point where it's about \$10 per soldier per day, and they get \$10 worth of value per day. And this, by the way, is for meals and water, power generation, fuel distribution, facility management and things like sanitation. So that's why I say it's kind of been evolutionary.

Now, I will also tell you that -- and, by the way, it is contractor supported for maintenance; it's contractor supported for life support; it's contractor supported for operations and maintenance of communications systems, and the Iraqi government aspires to make it self-performed over time, and we're helping them move in that direction. But these things -- this part of it takes time.

Q All right. So my follow-up to that, then, is -- it would seem to me that another one of the weak spots is the ability to conceptualize an operation at the highest levels and get that translated into actual, you know, tactical movements and logistics operations and things like that.

So are you seeing an improvement in the -- I guess in the senior operational commander level of the Iraqi army?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah, very much so. And we've run -- I don't have the numbers committed to memory, but we've run numerous command and control seminars and command post exercises, and the ministers themselves right on down the line participate. And in every case, those seminars and CPXs and training exercises then translate into better -- as you put it, the ability to conceptualize.

It's actually -- if I had to say what did I see in the beginning and what's becoming a bit more evident, there was a tendency to dramatically oversimplify things. When they would conceive of a mission, let's say, to Diwaniyah or a mission, you know, up north into Baqubah, it just wasn't -- there wasn't much attention to detail. We -- now -- I'm

telling you, now they are -- they appreciate the intricacies, the difficulties of coordinating movements and synchronizing things like logistics and communications and all that.

And you know, make -- you know, don't forget that there are 5,300 soldiers from outside of Baghdad that have been brought to Baghdad now as part of the Iraqi side of the surge. No question that six months ago that just simply wouldn't have been possible.

We're into our -- we're almost into our second rotation of those. And the difference between the hiccups and the failures of the first rotation to now is pretty damn dramatic, given that they're learning as they go in contact with the enemy.

Q Hm. Thank you.

Q General, it's Mark Finkelstein from Media Research Center. Thank you --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Mark Finkelstein?

Q Yes, Mark Finkelstein.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Okay.

Q Thank you very much for joining us.

GEN. DEMPSEY: My pleasure.

Q I recently read a report quoting you to the effect that the Iraqi army plans to expand significantly over the next few months and to add approximately 20,000 soldiers. I wonder, first, could you confirm that, and if so, expand upon it?

And second, we have read numerous reports to the effect that Sunni sheikhs in Al Anbar have played a positive role in encouraging men to volunteer for the police force. Have we seen a parallel phenomenon in the sheikhs encouraging and indeed obtaining the volunteering of Sunni men for the army?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah, okay. First let me tell you, we had a -- and again, I started here in June of '03; had a year break. But we've done annual assessments, we call them "in-stride assessments," the notion being, you know, we're in the middle of this thing, and in stride, or while we're running along, we assess whether we're growing what they need. And we try to identify any capabilities gaps that we may have overlooked as the situation on the ground changes. So every year we've had -- and it's always about the same time of year. We're just in the middle of the one you just referred to now for '07, and it will look at what needs to be done in '08, '09 and '10.

The one we did last year is the one you're actually referring to, where the prime minister identified a need to essentially transition from a short-war strategy partnered with us -- you know, I mean we made some assumptions in the early days about declining

levels of violence and a short war. And I think that together last year, you know, we kind of came to the mutual conclusion that it could very well be that the levels of violence will be sustained and that this terror threat, this insurgent threat, and the threat of sectarian violence could last in Iraq for some time. And if that's the case, then what do we need to do, what do we need to help Iraqis do to reassess the size of their force. And the answer was actually 24 battalions. And essentially, right now, as we sit here, we've got 338,000 in the combined forces. By the end of '07 it will be 370,000 -- and that's based on the in-stride assessment of last year.

Incidentally, the prime minister, when we presented this growth proposal to him, took the decision to pay for it himself, and invested that money into the U.S. Foreign Military Sales program. So he's funding the entire '07 growth plan, these 24 battalions. And we're in the middle of spending that money right now to grow these battalions.

Simultaneously, incidentally, we're replenishing the ranks to account for the attrition that has occurred. And the army loses about 18,000 a year. These are -- you know, now that we've got several years of data. And it also -- by the way, it matches with other similar conflicts around the world historically, that percentage of attrition. So they lose about 18,000 a year in the army, and they lose about 24,000 to 26,000 out of the police forces. So we're both replenishing -- we've got five regional training centers in the army and 12 police academies throughout Iraq -- soon to be 13. But we're both replenishing their ranks and growing their units.

And incidentally now, you know, if we were having this conversation a year ago, you'd be talking to the guy that would be planning it, resourcing it, monitoring it, you know, kicking it in the ass to make it go.

This is all actually being done now by Iraqis now. You know, we do provide resources, we provide energy, we provide advice, we help them conceive of these ideas, we help them understand, you know, the resourcing implications and how to contract responsibly through FMS, but it's very much now a shared responsibility, where last year at this time this was all us pushing it.

Now, the in-stride assessment we're doing right now is looking toward '08 -- notably '08, because their budget cycle begins in June, so we're helping them determine what their growth will be in '08 so they can budget for it.

The Al Anbar question, there is, in fact, a great deal of enthusiasm in Al Anbar for joining the police forces, to the tune of -- we started, oh, I don't know, six months ago with about 8,000 police in Al Anbar province, moving toward a goal of 11,000, and having a heck of a time closing the gap. Now we're over 11,000 right now, on our way to 14(,000), and we've got no shortage of police recruits, to the point where we're building -- I mentioned there were 12 academies in Iraq right now. We're building a 13th in Habbaniya in Al Anbar province so that they can train locally there.

There's not as much enthusiasm for joining the army, for two reasons, I think. One is they're not confident enough in the future of Iraq to be willing to join an army and have to move around Iraq. I mean that's, you know -- we just have to admit that -- where they are in their evolution and maturation as a new government.

And then the other reason is that there is -- you know, they fear that although most of the senior leaders of this army that have come back were from the former regime and many of them are Sunni, they fear blending in or trying to blend into what they perceive to be a predominantly Shi'a force.

Now interestingly, the army has always been predominantly Shi'a at the rank-and-file level, I mean historically, and the country is roughly 65 percent Shi'a to begin with. But we've got to fight through that. That doesn't mean we're not getting recruits out there. In fact, we are filling the ranks of the Iraqi army. There's two divisions out there, the 1st Division in Eastern Al Anbar and the 7th in Western Al Anbar, but there's far more enthusiasm for joining the police because they know they'll be able to stay local.

Q Very interesting. Thank you, General.

Q I guess it's my turn. This is Cindy Morgan with the Soldier's Perspective.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Hello, Cindy Morgan.

Q Hey. I was a former civilian contractor over there, and my question's going to kind of go along that line. I know logistics can be really hectic in there.

And the thing I've noticed from talking to friends that are still there is that some of the areas that we've run convoys through that used to be really safe have become really dangerous, and my assumption is that a lot of that is due to the Iraqis taking over the security of those areas.

Are we still helping or assisting those patrols in southern Iraq, you know, north of the Kuwait border, or are they doing that themselves? And what are we doing to help improve that?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yes, ma'am. First of all, before I do that, let me wish you a happy Mother's Day, and the reason I know you're a mother is I also know you have a child serving in the Army. And I want to thank you for sharing your child with us.

Q Thank you.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Now, the issue of convoy security is one that -- and particularly the long lines of communication between here and Kuwait is something we -- we're working extraordinarily hard on, and I'll tell you a couple of initiatives. There's a -- you know, we used to run straight out of Kuwait through Safwan, which is really on the

northern border of Kuwait, northeastern border of Kuwait and Iraq, and then up through Bosna -- I'm sorry -- Basra and up the long routed march up to Baghdad.

We've actually constructed and are soon to open a route that runs from Kuwait City to the northwest and then actually bypasses the part of the route that you're talking about that tends to be somewhat constricted and where we're more vulnerable. So that's kind of a construction initiative, to get at what you're talking about.

We've also got -- you know, as you know, I'm sure we're constantly updating our electronic countermeasures to account for the -- you know, the most recent tactics employed by the enemy. We've got a brigade that's designated and dedicated to convoy security. It's literally called the Convoy Security Brigade that works out of the various log bases along that long route from Kuwait to Baghdad. We're running far more overhead missions to help provide overhead imagery, pattern analysis and command and control of these convoys, so that if they do get hit, they're always in constant radio communications, and then we can vector, you know, the kind of forces to assist them as necessary.

Now, all that said, that's a very long line of communication, and we are vulnerable along it. But the recent trend, after a bit of a spike when the -- I tell you what spiked it, I think, was the announcement by the U.K. that they were going to reduce their presence in the Basra area. You know, you can see what happens sometimes when the enemy reads into things like that, and I think there was a bit of a spike there. But the British have done a pretty good job of pushing it back down, and I don't see that in the near term here we'll be any more vulnerable than we have been. And in fact, that road that we're going to open up that runs around Basra essentially should make the situation a lot better.

Q Okay. Thank you.

GEN. DEMPSEY: You're welcome.

MODERATOR: Okay, Bill.

Q Hello, General Dempsey.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Hello.

Q Bill --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Who's this?

Q My name's Bill Ragio (sp).

GEN. DEMPSEY: Bill Ragio (sp).

Q Two questions here, one on the delay in the supplemental funding. How is this impacting the training of the Iraqi forces? Is -- are you seeing a significant decrease in the training, or is not impacting it?

And secondly, there's been a report from -- I believe it was McClatchy News -- that the focus has shifted away from training the Iraqi army to security. I'd like you to comment on both of those issues, if possible.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah. Well, to the first one, the impact of the delay on the supplemental, we actually -- if you recall, there was a big meeting in Amman, Jordan, between President Bush and Prime Minister Maliki back in early December, and they decided that they would try to accelerate the development of the Iraqi security forces. So they actually directed me to accelerate the pace at which I was doing certain things -- expanding the training base, providing training, providing certain equipment and so forth. So I actually anticipated back in December that I would probably run out of money -- well, I would run out of the money I had, which was FY '06, FY '07 bridge money, in March, and so I began an effort to get the Army, really through OSD; I didn't care where they got it -- but to front me \$800 million -- "cash flow me" is the exact term -- cash flow me \$800 million in March against the eventual arrival of the supplemental, which I thought would be earlier; now it's going to be a little later.

But because we had that \$800 million reprogramming action and I got cash flowed this \$800 million, I'm okay. We haven't slowed anything, we haven't -- it has not impacted on MNSTC-I at all.

Now, I'll tell you that, you know, at some point, I've got to get the supplemental, and I've got to pay the money back and use the remainder to keep momentum alive. And it's all about momentum, by the way. That's the issue. And if the supplement is delayed beyond July, it will in fact have a -- it will have an impact, meaning if I don't have the money in hand in July.

So at this point, the timeline that they're following seems to suggest that I'll get it. But if I don't, it will have an effect. And so we're -- you know, we're obviously watching that very carefully. But for now, there's no effect on training, equipping or any of the other things that we do with and for the Iraqis.

The McClatchy report about the shift in emphasis away from training to providing security is a(n) oversimplification of what is a very complex environment. We -- MNSTC-I, that is, to say the command that's charged with all of the training -- hasn't changed our mission a bit, regardless of the security situation. I mean, we adapt to it regardless of the number of coalition forces here.

The coalition forces that are coming in actually provide the opportunity to partner more closely with the Iraqi security forces, and in some cases provide them some additional transition assistance.

Now what I would say, though, in the interest of complete candor here is, I think there was a calculation that we were transitioning at a pace that the Iraqis may not have been able to absorb, may not have been able to control, and that security and notably the protection of the population was suffering. And so -- or it was, the population was being negatively affected. So the idea here is that we refocus or re-emphasize providing security, not just us providing it but our Iraqi counterparts, and in so doing, you know, buy that window of opportunity or create that breathing space for the central government to find its way in terms of reconciliation and responsible governance.

But it really hasn't had an effect on my mission at all. I do think that post-surge there will probably be some places where because we kept doing things for our counterparts, you know, they may have become used to it, I suppose, and that we may have to, you know, break that umbilical cord a little more forcefully than we did the first time. But nevertheless, I wouldn't say that this has negatively affected my mission at this point.

MODERATOR: Thank you, General.

Strife (sp).

Q Hi, sir, this is Strife (sp) from Red State.

GEN. DEMPSEY: I'm sorry.

Q I said, this is Strife (sp) from Red State.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Hi, how are you?

Q Fine, I have a couple of questions.

The first is on basically, I guess, the AWOL rate in the security forces. Now I understand that when you're dealing with tribal societies, that is something you just have to adjust to. But I've also read that one of the problems is the lack of a system for the soldiers to be able to ensure their family actually get money. So they have to go home and deliver their paycheck so to speak. Is that an accurate assessment? And if so, is there anything being done to fix that?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah, the -- well, let's talk about the AWOL rate in general. I mentioned that about 18,000 is the annual attrition in the army, and about, you know, 24 or so is the attrition in the police. Of that the vast majority are actually KIAs and WIAs.

And I think that's an important point, because there is sort of, you know, anecdotal reporting that would suggest that most of the absenteeism in the Iraqi army is desertions and AWOL, when in fact -- I mean, in the past two years, that combined forces -- that's police and army -- have had 8,000 killed in action and about 18,000 wounded in action.

I guess -- let me state it a little bit differently. Over the course of about two years, we've tracked about 50,000 -- that we've lost 50,000 soldiers out of the force. Now remember, we're sitting at about 330,000 right now. And 23,000 of those -- that's both army and police -- probably are -- we -- can be counted in the category of deserters or AWOL -- AWOLs.

Now, what makes it -- you know, sometimes we get criticized for not reporting accurately, but what makes it extraordinarily hard in this part of the world to do that is that it is a manual system. And I'll come back to that in a second.

Secondly, in a way that wouldn't happen in our society or in our culture, some of these young men will walk off as individuals, sometimes they'll walk off as groups, but they'll come back. And the ministry or the central government or the -- or a provincial leader will appeal to them to come back, and they'll come back, and they'll be denied some pay or they'll be denied rank, but they soldier on.

And so, you know, I say that over the course of two, two and a half years we've counted about 23,000 that have left the ranks either by AWOL desertion or in some cases the admin. discharge, thrown out. But recently -- last fall in Al Anbar province, we had about 2,500 come back. And that happens in other provinces as well. That happened to be a very big burst of returnees, and so it's -- I -- you know, I remember it very well.

The pay issue over here -- as I said, everything is a manual system, and that's not because we're not trying to automate. We are automating. I mean, they've got a communications architecture now, voice and data, that's probably as good as any in this part of the world. And it's certainly far better than anything they had before.

But you know, to put an electronic banking system in place, for example, you begin to run into issues of trust, notably. I mean, they -- you know, they're not the most trusting people in the world when it comes to the passing of money. I'm sure you know that.

Even more -- in a more mundane way, you run into bandwidth problems. We've got a little proof of principle to set up an electronic banking system between here and Mosul, for example. And we're running into bandwidth problems because a lot of the bandwidth is consumed for other purposes right now.

And so the answer is that this manual pay system means that they are driven to a leave policy that allows a soldier seven days out of every month or so to go home and to take the money he's earned to his family. That's a fact. And some of them have to go from Mosul all the way down to Basra. Some of them are far more local than that. It's not as big a deal. We're trying to move them toward an electronic banking system, but I have to say conservatively that's probably five years off.

Q And a second question along the same line, sir, is one of the historic problems of armies built on the old Soviet model and of armies in the Arab world in general is the idea that your NCOs are sort of like smarter privates, but they don't really do the functions of NCOs in Western armies. Are we able to solve that problem through the training program or are we reverting -- seeing reversions to the way they've always done things?

GEN. DEMPSEY: I think -- honestly, I think the most honest answer to that would be -- which is what I hope you expect -- would be a little both, really.

Q It's always a big plus.

GEN. DEMPSEY: It's a little of both. And what I mean by that is we've got a system in place -- they have four military -- I'm talking army now; the police also have officer training programs and NCO training programs, but let me talk about the army, because it's a little cleaner. You know, the lines of authority are always a little cleaner when you talk about army NCOs. We've got four military academies that produce cadets, meaning young second lieutenants. It's going very well. And we've got a central senior NCO course up in Kirkuk, and we've got distributed regional lower-level, like E45, E6, something akin to our PLDC, Primary Leadership Development Course, in five locations so that each division -- each of those five locations services two divisions, because there's 10 divisions right now.

The problem we're running into is twofold. One, they are having a very tough time taking their aspiring or their rising leaders out of the fight. I mean, they're in a very tough fight and find themselves to be stretched rather thin to do all the things that they feel they need to do to control their battlespace. So we might have a course that will hold 150 in a given month in a given regional training center, and we might get 60. So, you know, we're kind of shooting behind the target. We know how many NCOs we need for this army. We've got the system in place, we've got the courses in places, they've got a good cadre in place, it's a good curriculum, but they can't unplug from the fight as they would like to do, and so, you know, we're coming up a bit short there.

Now, the use of those NCOs when they join the units is a struggle. The -- you know, I would say that they recognize the value of our NCO Corps, and I think they even aspire to have one someday, but they are not convinced they're ready for it right now. And so oftentimes you'll have -- you know, you'll have NCOs that are marginalized by their officer leaders because that's just the way it's always been. So, yeah. But that's why we've got the transition teams in there, is to give them a glimpse and then to coax and cajole them into using their NCOs.

Q Thank you very much, sir.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Okay. You're welcome.

MODERATOR: Yeah, we're just almost out of time here. Jared (sp), I think we may have time to get you in here.

Q Great, thanks. Good evening, sir. This is Lieutenant Jared Fisherman (sp). My question is --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Hey, Jared (sp).

Q -- hi -- with each day, do the Iraqi security forces get stronger or weaker, meaning is time on the side of the government and on our side or is it on the side of the enemy? And how do we go about figuring this out?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Boy. Is -- whose side in time on, huh? Gosh, I think my master's degree thesis was probably a little less complicated than that one. And that was on Irish poetry.

I would say that as long as we stay solid, and particularly at the institutional level -- in other words, as long as we stay committed to the central government, the ministries that have to become capable of supporting the forces in the field -- that time is on our side, and it's on the side of the government of Iraq. Because every day, you know, we have training -- you know, this army will not prevail necessarily because of the equipment we're giving it or the buildings we're building it. It will prevail because over time it accepts and inculcates the training systems, the disciplines, the processes, such as the preparation for military missions and the after-action reviews, to learn as you go.

It's not an army that is yet introspective. It doesn't look at itself and discover its own problems. So, you know, we're still in the process of doing some of that for them. But, you know, that all gets better every time you do it.

And I tell you, I mean, I don't know -- I'm not a historian, but it just seems to me that there hasn't been many times in history where we have built a military and police force in the middle of a war. I mean, it's not all that challenging to wait till the dust settles and the violence ebbs and then decide you're going to build something, because then you've got the space to do that. But I mean, we're trying to do this in the middle of a very tough fight, and yet, you know, we've got no shortage of recruits. They are incredibly resilient. They're probably more patient and tolerant of the violence in which they live than we would be. In fact, there's no question about that.

Stated a little differently, they're not like us, but there's much that we admire about them. If we mirror image them, we'll come up short every time. But I think time is on their side, because they're going to be good enough here in the next couple years.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, General. Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey with us from Iraq. And we're out of time now, sir.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Okay.

MODERATOR: Appreciate you spending the time with us.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Any time.

Q Thanks a lot, General.

Q Thank you, General.

GEN. DEMPSEY: All right.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Thank you. 'Bye.

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